

Sūrah 86

Al-Ṭāriq (The Night Visitor)

(Makkan Period)

Title

The expression *al-Ṭāriq*, featuring in the *Sūrah*'s opening verse came to be known as its title.

Period of Revelation

In its subject matter, this *Sūrah* is identical with early Makkan *Sūrahs*. However, internal evidence lends credence to the view that it was revealed at a time when the Makkan unbelievers had been hatching their impious designs against the Prophet's call to Islam.

Subject Matter and Themes

Two main themes lie at the core of this *Sūrah*: (1) Man's answerability to Allah after his death, and (2) The supreme, invincible status of the Qur'ān, which cannot be downgraded by any of the unbelievers' tricks or nefarious designs.

AL-TĀRIQ (The Night Visitor)

First, an oath is taken with reference to the stars in order to press home the truth that nothing can survive in the universe without Allah's protection. Man's attention is drawn to his own being – how he was created from a drop of sperm, developing later into a fully grown-up, living being. Surely Allah Who created him thus, has the power to bring him back to life. Man will be resurrected in order to test his deepest secrets. On the Day of Judgement, however, man shall have no power and no helper to escape the consequences of his misdeeds.

In conclusion, attention is drawn to the workings of the universe – rainfall and the growth of plant life and crops. These are significant, life-giving phenomena. By the same token, the truths enunciated in the Qur'ān are incontrovertible. The unbelievers mistakenly think that their tricks will stop the spread of the Qur'ānic message. They do not realize that Allah has been devising a plan that will defeat their guile. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is asked to bear with the unbelievers' opposition while the latter are served with a warning that they will soon see for themselves whether their impious designs succeed to any degree.

Appendix to

Sūrah al-Ṭāriq 86: n. 3

Here is the comment on our explanatory note 3 on *Sūrah al-Ṭāriq* by a medical doctor:

I have studied carefully your note yet I could not make much of it. As far as observation goes, semen is produced in testicles and through a network it passes through the inguinal canal, which lies parallel to the pelvic bone, into the prostate gland. I could not understand how it can be described as "the gushing fluid emanating from between the loins and the ribs". It is no doubt controlled by the nervous system embracing the ribs and the spinal cord. But even this is up to an extent. It is eventually controlled by the secretions of a gland in the brain. My query is related to ejaculation. Let me have your opinion on this issue. Since you subscribe to scientific knowledge, I have troubled you with this question. I am sorry for the inconvenience caused to you.

Our response to the above, as published in our journal, *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān* (November 1971) is as follows: "As you are a physician, you may appreciate this point better that although different body parts have their respective functions, none of these does it on its own. Rather, it is accomplished in coordination with others. Testicles are no doubt the site for the production of semen and the latter is ejaculated through a particular passage. However, it is subject to the normal functioning of the vital organs of the body. If these are dysfunctional, semen cannot be produced. Take the example of urine which is produced in the kidney, passes through

a passage into the bladder and is released by the penis. However, if all body parts associated with producing and circulating blood are not functioning properly, the kidney on its own cannot send urine to the bladder. The Qur'ān does not insist that this life-generating fluid is ejaculated from between the loins and the ribs. Rather, reference is to the emanating of this fluid from these. The Qur'ānic account does not rule out the mechanism responsible for the production and release of semen, accomplished by certain body parts. However, this mechanism is not complete in itself. It works while other parts are also working normally, especially the body mechanism devised by Allah for the loins and the ribs. That is why I have clarified that the entire body is not involved and even if one's limbs are cut off, the above mechanism remains in working order. However, if any vital organ placed between the loins and the ribs is not functioning, the above mechanism will not work either."

Two medical doctors have provided us with the following scientific facts regarding the above issue: It is evident from the study of embryology that the testes, the glands which produce semen are located close to the spine, ribs and kidneys in the foetus. Gradually, testes descend into testicles. At times this happens before and at others a little after delivery. Yet the source of their nerves and veins remains located between the loins and the ribs. Its artery, branching out from aorta, passes through the whole abdomen and supplies blood. Thus testes are essentially part of the backbone which have been relocated in the testicles in order to lower the degree of temperature. Moreover, although semen is produced by testes and it is deposited in the seminal vesicles, its control mechanism is located between the loins and the ribs. It is the brain that triggers the seminal vesicles and semen is discharged as a gushing fluid. In sum, the Qur'ān account is fully in accord with the latest medical knowledge on this issue.